

# FLIGHT JACKET

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Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif.

May 7, 2004

## Refuelers top off 3rd MAW

Story by Staff Sgt. Houston F. White Jr.

MWHS-3 Combat Correspondent

AL TAQQADUM, Iraq – Providing unrelenting support to aviation assets here, the Marines of the Forward Arming and Refueling Point, Marine Wing Support Squadron 374, Marine Wing Support Group 37, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, work around the clock to make certain 3rd MAW planes and helicopters have the fuel they need to “stay in the fight.”

“Our job is to refuel any and all aircraft that come here, 24 hours a day, seven days a week,” said Gunnery Sgt. David J. Flaishans, staff noncommissioned officer-in-charge, FARP, MWSS-374. “We have two seven-man teams that work 12 hours on and 12 hours off to keep things rolling.”

According to Lance Cpl. Christopher M. Conklin, bulk fuel specialist, FARP, MWSS-374, and 22-year-old San Diego native, the importance of the FARP’s mission in a combat environment motivates them to deliver the best service possible.

“It’s real life out here, not just practice,” he said. “In the case of a CH-46 (medical evacuation), getting fuel to (aircraft) faster could be the key to saving another Marine’s life.

“Also, keeping the (AH-1W Super) Cobras out there providing security for MEDEVACs and other missions makes a big difference.”

While speed is an essential part of refueling aircraft in a combat environment, safety also plays an integral part in the daily operations of the FARP, said Flaishans, a 37-year-old Trenton, Mich., native.

“We continuously stress following our unit’s (Standard Operating Procedures) by making sure we wear all of our safety gear and protective equipment,” he said. “We keep our sleeves down and wear goggles, cranials, as well as using hearing protection. My Marines are also very careful to avoid spilling fuel on themselves or the flight line.

“When our crew gets to work, we generally take a look around the fuel farm and make sure that there aren’t any leaks or anything else that could compromise safety,” added Lance Cpl. William J. Mueller, bulk fuel specialist, FARP, MWSS-374.



Lance Cpl. Christopher M. Conklin, bulk refueling specialist, Marine Wing Support Squadron 374, Marine Wing Support Group 37, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, and San Diego native, dashes to fill up an AH-1W Super Cobra in Al Taqqadum, Iraq, April 29. Conklin is one of the Forward Arming and Refueling Point Marines providing around-the-clock refueling capabilities in Iraq. Photo by Staff Sgt. Houston F. White Jr.

The 30-year-old, Appleton, Wis., native commented that the adrenaline surge associated with refueling aircraft makes the FARP Marines’ long hours worthwhile.

“I love refueling birds,” he said. “It’s kind of a charge actually, because we can hear (the helicopters) coming in. A lot of times we have to take off running, or else they’ll beat us to the refueling spot. When the (CH-46s) come in we have to guide them in, which is a real rush.”

Although the space the FARP Marines occupy may reside outside of the spotlight, the satisfaction they re-

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## U.S. troop levels in Iraq to remain high

Story by Jim Garamone

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – An Army brigade and two Marine expeditionary units will replace units of the 1st Armored Division and the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment in Iraq, Defense, Joint Staff and Army officials said.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld told reporters today at a DoD news briefing that he has approved Army Gen. John Abizaid’s request to keep the number of U.S. troops in Iraq at between 135,000 and 138,000.

In April, Abizaid, head of U.S. Central Command, asked for additional troops. DoD extended two brigades of the 1st Armored Division and the 2nd Light Cavalry Regiment in Iraq to give commanders a mobile reserve. The units are now operating in the Central-South region headquartered in Hillah. The units operate in and around Najaf, Karbala and Al Mahmudiyah.

Under the plan the units were set to spend not more than 90 days extra in Iraq and not more than 120 days before getting home.

Now the 2nd Brigade 10th Mountain Division from Fort Drum, N.Y., the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit from Camp Pendleton, Calif., and the 24th MEU from Camp Lejeune, N.C., will arrive in Iraq in the June/July timeframe.

“That will take us to a sustained level for now of around 135,000,” said Air Force Lt. Gen. Norton Schwartz, the Joint Staff operations chief. Before the Abizaid request, planners estimated the number of U.S. troops in Iraq was set at 115,000.

The 10th Division’s brigade is going back to a combat zone after about seven months at Fort Drum. The brigade deployed to Afghanistan and arrived back in December 2003. The Marine units will have spent a year at their home stations.

The Marine units will stick to their seven-month rotation plan, Schwartz said, and the Army unit can spend up to a year in Iraq. All this, of course, is subject to the needs of the combatant commander, he pointed out.

Schwartz also said that Rumsfeld has approved alerting more than 600 Army National Guard and Army Reserve units as part of the deployment for the Operation Iraqi Freedom 3 rotation. These units will not deploy until later in the year.

This alert affects more than 37,000 soldiers in combat-service and combat-service-support units. He said the units include the gamut of specialties – among them aviation, transportation, quartermaster, signal, medical, military intelligence, military police, explosive ordnance disposal, maintenance, adjutant general, chaplain and engineer units. The forces could be in Iraq for a year.

Officials said they know which active duty divisions will be part of the OIF 3 deployment, but they are waiting for the official announcement of proper notification. “All of the units ... when we redeployed the OIF 1 units, were given a certain timeline to reset for follow-on contingencies if required,” said Lt. Gen. Richard Coty, the Army operations chief.

## Inside

Weekend forecast from Miramar’s weather station



74°/56°  
Today



76°/56°  
Saturday



75°/56°  
Sunday

### Devil pup lifts spirits in Iraq



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### Sweet treats sent to troops



Page 4

# Rumsfeld to take all actions needed at Abu Ghraib

## *Alleged abuse of prisoners will be pursued under Uniform Code of Military Justice*

Story by Jim Garamone

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – The Defense Department will take all actions necessary to find out what happened at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and see that the appropriate actions are taken, the department's top civilian leader said today.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said the matter of alleged abuse of prisoners in the prison by U.S. military personnel will be pursued properly under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

"The actions of the soldiers in those photographs are totally unacceptable and un-American," Rumsfeld said during a Pentagon news conference. "Anyone who engaged in such actions let down their

**"The actions of the soldiers in those photographs are totally unacceptable and un-American. Anyone who engaged in such actions let down their comrades who serve honorably each day, and they let down their country."**

**Donald H. Rumsfeld**

comrades who serve honorably each day, and they let down their country."

Rumsfeld said the actions of the prison guards at the facility were an exception, and the vast majority of servicemembers serve the United States with honor.

"They uphold the values of our country as they battle enemies that show little compassion or respect for innocent human life," he said.

The photographs taken by participants

and now broadcast around the world show American servicemembers abusing and degrading Iraqi detainees. Rumsfeld said the actions of those few American servicemembers "damaged" the fragile trust the United States is trying to build with the people of Iraq.

"The images that we have seen that include U.S. forces are deeply disturbing – both because of the fundamental unacceptability of what they depicted, and

because the actions of U.S. military personnel in those photos do not in any way represent the values of our country or the armed forces," Rumsfeld said.

The criminal investigation has resulted in the Army charging six soldiers from the 800th Military Police Brigade with a variety of offenses. The soldiers still are serving in Iraq – not as military police – and will remain there until the investigations are complete. They are being charged with criminal offenses including conspiracy, dereliction of duty, cruelty and maltreatment, assault and indecent acts with another.

Six other soldiers have received letters of reprimand, including two soldiers who were immediately relieved of duty, Rumsfeld said.

# DoD working to improve slow military mail process to troops

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample

Headquarters Marine Corps

WASHINGTON – Acknowledging that problems persist in the military mail system, Defense Department officials said they are taking steps to improve the process.

A report this month by the General Accounting Office, which oversees government agencies and spending, said long-standing problems with military mail delivery need to be resolved.

DoD is aware of the problem and is working to remedy it, said Charles S. Abell, principal deputy undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, in an interview with the American Forces Radio and Television Service.

"Mail is very important to our servicemembers and their families, and thus it's very important to the Department of Defense and the leadership," Abell said. "Every time we identify a glitch in the process, we move immediately to fix it."

According to the GAO report, more than 65-million pounds of letters and parcels were delivered to troops serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, and problems with prompt and reliable mail delivery surfaced early on.

Congress and the White House forwarded more than 300 inquiries about mail delivery problems to military postal officials, the report said.

The GAO reported that soldiers and Marines in Operation Iraqi Freedom were unhappy with mail service; almost 60 percent of 127 service members surveyed said they were "dissatisfied" with the timeliness of mail delivery.

Although a test of transit time for mail delivery by military postal officials showed that so-called "data test letters" arrived in theater within the wartime standard of 11 to 14 days, servicemembers said their personal mail actually took much longer to reach them.

More than half of the surveyed soldiers from Fort Stewart, Ga., and Marines from Camp Pendleton, Calif., said they waited four weeks or longer to get mail. Others commented that mail took as long as four months to work its way through the system, the report said.

Another 80 percent said they were aware of mail that was sent to them but was not received while they were deployed. The nonreceipt of mail became a concern for friends and family back home, the report stated.

Abell said that during a recent visit to Iraq, he talked to com-

manders and troops about mail delivery and found "generally good" reports.

He said slow delivery can be attributed to the sheer distance the mail has to travel to reach the theater and the remote locations of some units on the ground. Mail to Iraq is delivered either by tactical airlift or along dangerous convoy supply routes from Kuwait and Bahrain.

"It takes a lot of logistical support to get the mail from 'Mr. and Mrs. America' to our units on the ground," Abell said. "We're working it, we're watching the flow, and every time we can find a way to decrease the transit time, we act on it."

Abell said stability in Iraq will help to ease some mail delivery problems, because "units aren't moving around as much - we know where they are and the logistical links to them to provide the mail."

DoD also increased the number and size of military postal units in Kuwait and Bahrain, Abell said, which has helped to reduce transit times.

He noted that the mail will be especially important as election time approaches, with thousands of servicemembers expected to request and mail in absentee ballots.

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## MIRAMARKS

"Why is receiving mail important while deployed?"



**CPL. KATIE M. TA**

Awards clerk  
MWSG-37

"You can be thousands of miles away from family, but when you receive a letter you can still have a part of them with you."

**STAFF SGT. JOSEPH WRIGHT**  
Warehouse chief  
MAG-46

"It would give me that needed encouragement to keep pushing forward."



**CPL. JAIME A. FAVORS**

Supply clerk  
MWSG-37

"It keeps up troop morale."



## FLIGHT JACKET

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Forward Deployed



Luci continues to settle into her role as the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing mascot in Al Asad, Iraq, May 2. *Photo by Sgt. David M. Walsh*

## MWSS-374 gift from general lifts spirits

Story by Staff Sgt. Houston F. White Jr.

*MWHS-3 Combat Correspondent*

AL TAQQADUM, Iraq – For centuries, dogs have been known as “man’s best friend” because of their unconditional love and loyalty, so it came as no surprise when the arrival of an 11-week-old Iraqi puppy named Melissa softened the hearts of the battle-hardened “Rhinos” of Marine Wing Support Squadron 374, Marine Wing Support Group 37, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, here.

“I believe all Marines, in their hearts, are dog lovers,” explained Maj. Gen. James F. Amos, commanding general, 3rd MAW, “so it’s easy to have compassion for a dog who is out in the middle of a war zone. I felt that maybe a dog would pick their spirits up and be something the squadron could identify with and get a touch of home.”

The arrival of Melissa as a gift, however, was quite unexpected, said Lt. Col. David R. Leppelmeier, commanding officer, MWSS-374.

“I received an e-mail from General Amos back in April saying that he was going to bring me something, but I really had no idea what was going on,” said the 44-year-old native of Babylon, N.Y.

The “something” Leppelmeier didn’t know about almost turned out to be a personality mismatch for MWSS-374, said Amos.

“My original intention was to give (Melissa’s mom) Luci to Lieutenant Colonel Leppelmeier in Taqqadum as a squadron mascot,” said Amos, “because he’d lost two Marines early on, and the unit was right in the middle of a pretty tough mission there.”

After witnessing the stubborn and independent nature of Luci due to her rough upbringing in Baghdad, Iraq, however, the 3rd MAW commanding general decided that Luci’s offspring would be a wiser selection for the MWSS-374 mascot.

According to Amos, Luci was left without a family when an Army unit departed Baghdad, which presented the 3rd MAW commanding general with the perfect opportunity to assume responsibility for the



Luci’s sole surviving puppy, Melissa, anxiously awaits the return of her adopted father, Lt. Col. David R. Leppelmeier, commanding officer, Marine Wing Support Squadron 374, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, April 28. *Photo by Staff Sgt. Houston F. White Jr.*

courageous dog and her sole surviving puppy from a litter of five.

“Luci was working with Army Special Forces on the streets of Baghdad,” relayed Amos, “and over a period of time, she kept following them around whenever they went on patrols. Luci was credited with saving their lives a couple of times because of her ability to sniff out an ambush and bark to alert them.”

“When (3rd MAW) went into Baghdad about a month and a half ago to drop off some wounded Marines, Luci and the pup were brought out to the airplane, and we took both dogs back to Al Asad (Iraq) with us,” he said.

Following the general’s decision to send Melissa to Al Taqqadum, the plan was quickly put in motion.

“We fly in and out of Taqqadum on a regular schedule, so it was pretty simple for

## HMLA-775 Marines dedicate compound to fallen brother

Story by Staff Sgt. Houston F. White Jr.

*MWHS-3 Combat Correspondent*

AL TAQQADUM, Iraq – Silent echoes of the 24-year-old Summit, Ohio, native’s memory still resonated in the hearts and minds of the Marines of Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 775, Marine Aircraft Group 16, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, April 22 as they paid their fallen comrade a heartfelt tribute here.

Dubbed “Brownfield Station” in honor of Cpl. Andrew D. Brownfield, an ordnance Marine attached to Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 16, MAG-16, 3rd MAW, killed in action March 18, while serving in Al Asad, Iraq, the HMLA-775 ordnance facility was the site of the solemn dedication.

Presiding over the memorial was Navy Lt. James A. Bradshaw, chaplain, Marine Wing Support Squadron 374, who reflected upon the life of the deceased Marine.

“He was motivated and had a lot of fun,” said the 53-year-old native of Virginia Beach, Va. “He took a personal interest in every Marine that worked with him and spent extra hours mentoring them and helping them earn rank, as well as just helping them be more motivated. Corporal Brownfield was a person who loved people and sacrificed, even to the end, by giving his own life.”

According to Chief Warrant Officer 3 Dirk D. Kuntz, aviation ordnance officer, HMLA-775, the decision to name their workplace after their fellow “ordy” was a unanimous one.

“The ordnance Marines here at (HMLA-775) were looking to name our compound just out of habit,” said the 35-year-old native of Peshtigo, Wis. “A couple of names were brought up, and I mentioned Brownfield Station as a possibility. It immediately caught on, and everybody thought it was an awesome idea.”

Kuntz also mentioned that the tireless effort of part-time artist Sgt. Jonathan W. Rau, aviation ordnance technician, HMLA-775, was responsible for creating the sign for the ceremony.

For the 25-year-old native of Fargo, N.D., the opportunity to honor the memory of Brownfield was one he couldn’t pass up.

“The fact that he was an ordnance Marine made it something I really felt I had to do so that we could keep his memory with us. It makes me feel good that we made it happen,” said Rau.

With the new landmark freshly installed, Kuntz hopes that the shrine will become an inspiration to all his Marines on an ongoing basis.

“I would like the monument to be at least a daily reminder to them and refresh their drives on an individual level by helping them focus on mission accomplishment,” he said.

Following their return home, the ordnance section has plans to send the sign to the Brownfield family as a gift from the Marines who served with him.

“We want to make sure his family and loved ones know that he will never be forgotten,” said Rau.

# Girl Scouts send taste of home to deployed troops

Story by Lance Cpl. John Sayas

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

Marines and Sailors celebrated with the Girl Scouts and San Diego community members with the shipment of more than 125,000 boxes of Girl Scout cookies and handwritten notes to thousands of American troops serving in Kuwait, Afghanistan and Iraq as part of Operation Thin Mint during a ceremony at the Mayflower Van & Storage Company April 26.

Operation Thin Mint is a way for San Diego and Imperial Valley residents to show their support for the men and women serving in countries overseas, according to Jo Dee C. Jacob, executive director, San Diego-Imperial Council. The San Diego-Imperial Council, along with other community sponsors, supported the Girl Scouts in their efforts to send thanks to the thousands of American troops deployed overseas.

Local Girl Scouts sold Operation Thin Mint cookies during their annual cookie sale that ran from Jan. 24 to March 21. Since 1992, more than 313,000 boxes of cookies have been purchased and sent overseas.

"It is a very exciting day for the Girl Scouts and San Diego-Imperial Council," Jacob said. "A lot of hard work from the community went into this. We spent a lot of energy and a lot of commitment because we really care about the men and women serving overseas."

She added that many San Diegans either know a deployed servicemember or are related to one and want to be able to show their support in some way.

"This is really a military community, and that's why Operation Thin Mint is still successful," Jacob said.

In addition to the cookies, servicemembers will receive thousands of handwritten messages of thanks and support from Girl Scouts and the San Diego community. Both were ceremoniously loaded onto two refrigerated

trucks and put en route to their final destination following the ceremony. An earlier shipment of cookies and messages arrived in Singapore for distribution to operating units of the 5th and 7th Navy Fleets.

Maj. Gen. Jon A. Gallinetti, commanding general, Marine Corps Air Bases Western Area, was on hand to receive the huge gift on behalf of the thousands of Marines currently serving in Iraq.

He returned from Iraq earlier this month after serving more than seven months with Combined Joint Task Force 7 as the chief of staff for Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, commander of coalition forces in Iraq.

"I can't tell you how overwhelming it is to receive support like this from America," Gallinetti said to a crowd of Girl Scouts and San Diego residents. "It helps everything that is going on over there and we appreciate it very much."



**Maj. Gen. Jon A. Gallinetti, commanding general, Marine Corps Air Bases Western Area, is greeted by Girl Scouts wanting to thank him for his military service. Photo by Lance Cpl. John Sayas**



**Cpl. Kyle E. Kennedy (left), aviation communications technician, Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 11, and Medford, Ore., native signs autographs for Girl Scouts April 26. Photo by Lance Cpl. John Sayas**

# Former 'Green Knights' reunite after 60 years

Story by Cpl. Jeff Zaccaro

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

On Sept. 15, 1944, more than 150,000 American soldiers stormed the beaches of Normandy during an amphibious assault that would forever be known as D-Day.

While soldiers were landing on the beach via a 5,000-vessel armada, the Marines of Marine Fighter Squadron 121 were landing on the small island of Peleliu in the Palau Islands.

Although only being formed as a squadron under Marine Aircraft Group 12 for less than three years, the "Green Knights" brought a good deal of combat experience to the island, having fought on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands less than two years before, where they were credited with shooting down more Japanese planes than any other squadron.

VMF-121 flew combat missions in Peleliu until July 25, 1945, when they were sent back to the states on the *USS Lookout* to be disbanded Sept. 9, 1945, at Miramar, Calif.

Now, nearly 60 years later, a handful of Marines who were originally part of the Guadalcanal and Peleliu crews were reunited here in front of Hangar One, home of the new Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 121.

According to George Burianic, who served with the "Green Knights" as a private first class Corsair mechanic from 1942-1945, the crew has been reuniting since 1989 in various locations throughout the country but this is the first time they held a reunion at VMFA-121 headquarters.

Even though not everyone from the original crew was able to make it to the reunion, almost 40 people were present on the flightline.

"There are only 17 veterans including our corpsman here today, but there are a lot of children and grandchildren that come to the reunions," said Burianic, who currently resides in Palmyra, Penn. "If you don't keep these things going it will eventually die."

One of the veterans who made the trip, Raynard Turner, a former combat corpsman for VMF-121 and the 1st Marine Division, was excited to see old friends and new equipment, such as an F/A-18 Hornet the "Green Knights" had on display.

"This is a great thrill to see friends from years ago and the opportunity to see the changes in the aircraft," said Turner of Marino Valley, Calif.

"We used to have dances and parties for the reunions, but now we just kind of sit around and talk about those who didn't make it and get re-acquainted with those who did," he added.

Since this was the first reunion to incorporate some of the Marines presently serving with VMFA(AW)-121, it was a great experience for them as well.

"As every 'Green Knight' who spoke to the World War II squadron members can attest, the sense of squadron pride could not be any higher.

"These Marines are the founding fathers of our squadron, and to listen to their personal accounts ranging from originally

operating here out of Miramar to their experiences of combat in the Pacific made their visit certainly a special opportunity for us," said Capt. Craig Connell, a pilot with VMFA(AW)-121.

Although there is no way to tell how many veteran Marines will make it to next year's reunion, said Burianic, as long as there are still living members of VMF-121, they will continue to relive the past and inspire the future.

"They solidify the meaning of 'Semper Fidelis,' and motivate each Marine to carry on with the experiences and traditions set forth by these veterans," said Connell.



Gilbert Klarner, a veteran of the former Marine Fighter Squadron 121, takes a look inside an F/A-18 Hornet during a VMF-121 reunion April 30. Photo by Cpl. Jeff Zaccaro

# Military police, K-9 partners work hand in hand

Story by Lance Cpl. Skye Jones

*MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent*

The Belgian Malinois, which some may say sounds like a foreign body part, is a war-fighting tool that is highly capable of breaking human bones.

The Malinois is actually a working dog that will defend its master until the end. The characteristics of a Malinois include alertness, devotion, intensity, and vigilance - characteristics that can compare to those of a real “devil dog.”

Sgt. Wilfred K. Porras and his partner in justice, Kwinto, work together to benefit the Marine Corps.

“We aid the Corps by being ready to go at any given time,” said the North Bergen, N.J., native. “When the Corps needs us, Kwinto and I are set for that mission.”

Kwinto and his K-9 handler have deployed to the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, twice in the past two years since they’ve been working with each other. In addition, they have successfully accomplished two Presidential secret service missions.

Porras said training is a must in order to prepare for all types of operations he and his partner may be called up for.

“When we’re not patrolling, we’re training,” he added.

“We try to train as realistically as possible and in every environment so the handler and dog will feel confident enough



**Kwinto receives praise from his handler and Military Policeman Sgt. Wilfred K. Porras. Photo by Lance Cpl. Skye Jones**

for any mission,” said Mabank, Texas, native Staff Sgt. Heath L. Kinder, K-9 kennel master.

Every military working dog and future partner in protecting crime must complete three parts of training, the first being the five phases of aggression training.

First, a Marine and his dog must conduct a field interview. A person will come within one arms distance from the two, and the dog must sit and refrain from attacking.

“If I come in close contact with a person, I need to ensure that Kwinto will



**Military working dog Kwinto jumps over a fence in the obstacle course which trains the dogs in obedience. Kwinto and his partner, Sgt. Wilfred K. Porras, are preparing to deploy this year. Photo by Lance Cpl. Skye Jones**

not bite them. These dogs are very handler protective,” explained Porras.

The second phase is called a “false run into a bite.”

“If I’m on patrol and I ask someone for their identification and they do not comply, I will give them a warning. If they run, I will unleash Kwinto,” described Porras.

The third phase of training, explained Porras, is a stand off. If a person runs but then shouts, “I give up!” a command to cease the attack will be ordered. Next is the search phase. The dog will go up to a person and the command to “stay” will be vocalized while the person is searched.

Lastly, the team will conduct escort training. If after the search the suspect is apprehended, the dog will have to heal and watch the person without biting.

“I know Kwinto has my back. If someone is behind me, he’ll warn me,” said Porras. “He protects me. He’ll save my life and other people’s lives.”

After aggression training is complete, the dogs go through detection training which includes building and area searches.

First, explained Porras, he challenges the building and shouts, “Show yourself or I’ll release my dog.” If there is no response he tells Kwinto to “Find ‘em!” Kwinto will then go in the structure and search for the suspect and clear the building.

This type of training, he added, comes in handy.

“Take this past month for example. We conducted an explosive detection at the commissary and exchange. Both buildings had to be cleared because we received a bomb threat,” mentioned Porras.

Conducting an area search is just as important, he explained, and can be held anywhere from a field, park or an open lot.

The third and final category of training is obedience instruction. This includes going through the obstacle course, which is located at the K-9 building. Commands as



**Sgt. Wilfred K. Porras, military police, K-9 handler, and his military working dog, Kwinto, play together as a reward for their training. Photo by Lance Cpl. Skye Jones**

basic as “sit” and “heal” are taught as well.

“In order for Kwinto and I to become a team, we have to prove ourselves worthy,” said Porras. “Every new military working dog team must get certified.”

The Provost Marshal will verify if the team is ready to work together. To demonstrate their capabilities, they will have to pass a test. A realistic scenario will be set up, and the two will have to tackle the task at hand. Explosive dogs will have to detect all of the bombs in the building and narcotic dogs will have to find all the drugs. Once certified, the Marine and his dog become a K-9 unit.

“They make a great team,” mentioned Ellsworth, Mich., native Cpl. Michael J. Rubingh, military police and working dog handler. “They both rely on each other.”

Porras said the age-old saying dogs are a “man’s best friend” holds true in his case.

“He’s my partner and buddy,” concluded Porras.

# Controlled burn clears view for MWSS-374

*Marine fire inspectors in Iraq clear line of sight, make base less accessible to intruders*

Story by Staff Sgt. Houston F. White Jr.

MWHS-3 Combat Correspondent

AL TAQQADUM, Iraq – The scene unfolded in a scripted symphony of fiery devastation. The sharp crackling of dry reed and underbrush blended frantically with the pungent aroma of the thick, dark smoke that filled the sky. Amidst the choreographed inferno stood the two Marines responsible for setting the designated area ablaze - systematically reducing it to a pasture of smoldering ash.

The controlled burn performed here April 27 by base Fire Inspectors Staff Sgt. Donald Burton and Cpl. Samuel D. Minks, both members of Marine Wing Support Squadron 374, Marine Wing Support Group 37, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, was conducted to make the base less accessible to intruders by water.

“Today we conducted a controlled burn on the shoreline of Lake Habbaniyah so that the Marines manning the observation tower here can have clear visibility of anything or anyone that attempts to come to the shore or on base without the tower seeing them,” said Burton, a 34-year-old native of Cincinnati.

“We have never had a problem at this guard post before,” he added, “but it was done because the shoreline was covered by underbrush, and the camp commandant just wanted to have a little more security over the area.”

According to Minks, the dangers



**Cpl. Samuel D. Minks, base fire inspector, Marine Wing Support Squadron 374, Marine Wing Support Group 37, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, and St. Louis native, sets a brush fire at the edge of Lake Habbaniyah in Al Taqqadum, Iraq, April 27. Photo by Cpl. Chance W. Haworth**

inherent to handling fire were reduced because of the training he and Burton received at Military Occupational Specialty school.

“At the Aircraft Firefighting School in Goodfellow, Texas, part of our curriculum was wild land firefighting,” said the 24-year-old native of St. Louis. “It’s really in-

depth training. Our instructors started fires, and we had to put them out; so that helped us a lot today.”

Prior planning also played a key part in making sure that any possible hazards were appropriately addressed, Burton said.

“Before we started the burn, we came out four days in advance and checked the

surrounding area to make sure there wasn’t any billeting or personnel working nearby. If there was anything like that close to this region, we would have had to dig and create a berm around the area that we were burning.”

In addition, Minks mentioned that both Army and Marine firefighting units here were notified that the controlled burn was taking place so that they could stop by and check to make sure everything was under control.

Probably the largest factor assisting the dynamic duo in accomplishing their mission was Mother Nature.

“The area we burned is very dry, and it’s stacked up really thick, so if you start a small fire in one area and the wind is working with you, it can help push it, and you can burn several acres of land in a short period of time,” explained

Minks.

“The surrounding elements helped us keep the fires we started in control,” added Burton. “We have a lot of wetlands around this particular area, so the fire burned until it reached the moist, green areas of the shoreline and then it kind of burned itself out.”

# Marine to become NASA astronaut

Story by Lance Cpl. Skye Jones

*MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent*

This year NASA selected one Marine in the country to become an astronaut.

Maj. Randy J. Bresnik, operations officer, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 232, was selected out of several thousand applicants for a seat in the Astronaut Candidate Training program.

“I am very honored to represent the Marine Corps in the space program,” said the Santa Monica, Calif., native. “This is something as a kid I never thought was possible. I built model airplanes with my dad and watched sci-fi films, but I never thought this was a realistic possibility. I was amazed when I got called for an interview. It was very humbling.”

The last group of astronauts was selected in 2000. Bresnik will be part of the 19th group chosen by the National Aeronautics Space Administration since its inception in 1959.

Before Bresnik could even be considered for an interview into Astronaut Candidate Training, he submitted an application including a brief overview of his job history, the number of aircraft he has flown, the number of hours he has flown, his college grades and other accomplishments.

One of Bresnik’s biggest accomplishments was graduating first in his class at Test Pilot School at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Md. Since commissioning, Bresnik has flown approximately 3,000 hours in 75 different types of aircraft throughout his career.

“The first time I flew on an aircraft I felt at home,” described Bresnik. “I knew I was doing the right thing and that I was meant to be a pilot.”

He submitted his application, which included all of his achievements, to Headquarters Marine Corps in the fall of 2002, and they sent it to NASA after reviewing it. NASA officials then selected approximately 100 applicants for an interview.

“It was the interview of a lifetime,” explained Bresnik. “It was that one shot to show them who you are and if you’re the type of person they want in their program. There were about 14 to 15 people from NASA who asked questions about my background, along with more in-depth questions about my application.”

NASA then picked two pilots to go onto training, Bresnik and an Air Force pilot. Both were selected out of the 14 pilots who had received an interview.

“He’s the type of person you would want to do a job like this. He definitely deserves this,” said Staff Sgt. Scott G. Walker, operations chief, VMFA-232.

“It is imperative as a leader that you set the example. If something needs to be done, he’ll be the first to step up and do it. He sets the example for all ranks. I’m glad that he got selected for NASA, it makes me proud to work for him,” added the Strong, Maine, native.

Bresnik will continue to set the example when he goes to Astronaut Candidate Training Aug. 9 at the Johnson Space Center in Houston.

“I always try the best I can at whatever I do,” said Bresnik. “If I said ‘I can never do that’ I wouldn’t be here.”



**Maj. Randy J. Bresnik, operations officer, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 232, poses in front of an F/A-18 Hornet after a flight. Photo courtesy of Maj. Randy J. Bresnik**

## Iraqi incident sparks anger

Commentary by Cpl. Alice Davila

*MAG-46 Administrative Clerk*

The abuse on the Iraqi detainees made by U.S. Army soldiers has seemingly fostered a sense of global disgust in our nation, in outside nations and in the U.S. military community.

This unfortunate incident has brought dishonor to all of us that serve our country as proud servicemembers.

These criminal acts in no way represent the nature of men and women in uniform that serve honorably, heroically and bravely in Iraq.

“All services are viewed as one in the civilian world. Anybody that hasn’t served in a sector of the military doesn’t have the ability to distinguish between the branches. It’s seen as all one in the eyes of the public,” said Lance Cpl. James K. Contreras, administration clerk, Marine Aircraft Group 46.

Cpl. Bengamin Ortiz, administration clerk, MAG-46, felt a prime example of this. He stated, “I got home, and my wife said, ‘You guys are sick.’”

He tried to explain to his wife that it wasn’t the Marines that did it.

“Marines don’t do that,” Ortiz told his wife.

But the fact of the matter is we’re all Americans, and this disgusting mistake made by these soldiers not only effects us as a military service but our entire country as a whole.

Statements made by the individuals pleading lack of training and knowledge are unacceptable. In the Marine Corps, through our intensive training in boot camp, we’re taught strict discipline and esprit de corps.

Marines are taught that when in foreign countries you need to treat civilians humanely and private property as if it were your own.

Our instructions are to ensure civilians are protected from acts of violence, threats and insults both from the enemy and from any of our fellow Marines.

This discipline instilled in us is what makes us stand together as a distinct branch

**See OUTRAGED, page 11**



## Some time off with Marines

Members of the U.S. Olympic Freestyle Ski Team look on as Sgt. Pablo Piombo, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron Indoor Simulated Marksmanship Trainer operator, explains how to operate the M-240G machine gun April 30. Ski team members were at Chula Vista’s Olympic Training Center for the upcoming 2004 Olympics in Greece and spent their only day off from training with station Marines. Photo by Sgt. W.A. Napper Jr.

# Choose to lose excess weight with Semper Fit

*Class gives participants tools to lose weight, feel great*

Story by Sgt. Kristen L. Tull

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

The United States has the highest rate of obesity according to the American Diabetes Association, which is directly related to the way Americans eat, from portion size to content. Marine Corps Community Services holds a class to help battle the bulge through the Choose to Lose Program.

"The point is to teach people how to lose body fat," said Julie Carlson, Health Promotions educator through MCCS and Semper Fit. "I wanted to give people the tools on how to lose weight from the information I give them in this class. I explain to them why they need to eat certain things, why they need to eat five times a day, why it's important to eat fruits and vegetables, and why it's not a good thing to have Oreos as part of their daily staple diet."

Carlson said participants are then free to make food choices on their own. It's not like Jenny Craig or Weight Watchers, she added,

where individuals are told exactly what they need to eat.

"I think education is power. The more I can educate people and help them understand why they are eating what they are eating, the more I feel it will last a lifetime," said Carlson.

The classes, which are open to all military personnel, their families and Department of Defense employees, teach participants about high blood pressure, cholesterol, obesity and heart disease.

"My class is a total mixture of people. I have overweight Marines, and I have Marines that are not overweight but want to lose weight for a better look," said Carlson. "A lot of family members, wives and retirees also attend. I try to get people that are really serious about it. I won't write a diet out for them, and I can't guarantee them a miracle, but I will provide them with knowledge."

Jennifer Short, MCCS Marketing, has taken Carlson's class twice and finds it very beneficial.

"I joined for the knowledge of healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle. There are so many things out there that are 'hype,' I

didn't know which one to believe," said Short. "I wanted to know which ones were worth taking and which ones were a hoax."

Short found out many of them work as a "quick fix," but she said that wasn't what she needed. What she did need, she said, was a lifestyle change, and Carlson taught her how to do that.

One of the phrases Carlson uses in her class is 'It's a livit not a diet,' meaning it's a program that participants have to live with, rather than 'die' with a 't' at the end of it. Short actually put that phrase up on her refrigerator as a motivating tool.

"With her class it's very easy to get motivated and pumped," said Short. "She is very energized and holds the classes at your level."

The class also pointed out things Short did well such as drinking a lot of water, low

fat milk and not smoking.

One thing that really surprised me was NutriGrain Bars, I thought they were really healthy, when they were actually loaded with fat," said Short. "I realized that I needed to limit my

carbohydrates more. If you overeat them, and you don't use what you eat, it turns into sugar which turns into fat on your body."

This class is recommended for anyone who wants to start a healthy eating program but is a little bit daunted about it, or if they are finding out that their metabolism is slowing down a bit as they get older.

Carlson wants new students to leave her class feeling they can now make the right choices and give the ones that come back a little extra motivation to get back on the healthy lifestyle wagon.

"I had a guy drive by me the other day, he yelled out the window and said, 'Hey Julie, I want to bring my wife in to meet you. I lost 40 pounds from following your advice, I want you to talk to my wife.' Even though that statement may be a little dangerous in a marriage, it was one of the biggest compliments I received since starting the program," said Carlson.

The class is held at the new gym from 11:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. once a week for four classes that started April 20.

"Everyone is welcome to come, it's

See **CHOOSE**, page 11

## Cultural diversity of Corps celebrated

Compiled by CPAO

In honor of the diverse culture of the men and women who serve in the armed services, May is designated as Asian Pacific American Heritage Month.

According to Marine Administrative Message 193/04, the theme for 2004 is "Freedom for all – a nation we call our own."

Congressmen Frank Horton and Norman Mineta originally introduced Asian Pacific American Heritage Month as Pacific/Asian Heritage Week in July 1977.

In 1992, the 102nd Congress unanimously approved Public Law 102-450 designating May as Asian Pacific American Heritage Month.

When Asian immigrants first arrived in the United States, they were welcomed in

some places and merely tolerated in others.

In the late 1800s, Chinese and other Asians were legally excluded from citizenship and quotas were placed on their immigration to the United States.

These laws were repealed during World War II. Further immigration law changes made it easier for Asians to enter the United States.

Asian Americans have contributed immensely to our nation through science, art and leadership. Today about 5,000 Marines of Asian descent serve on active duty.

Many Asian American Marines bring with them cultural talents and skills that have proven valuable in personnel and diplomatic events and most recently the war on terrorism.



## Chapel weekly schedule of events

### Holy Family Catholic Community

- ◆ Mass: 11 a.m. Sunday, 11:30 a.m. weekdays.
- ◆ Rosary: 10:30 a.m. Sunday.
- ◆ Confession: 10:15 a.m. Sunday or for appointments call Father Berchmanz at 577-1333.
- ◆ Religious classes for children for first communion, confirmation: 9:30-10:45 a.m. Sunday.
- ◆ Youth gathering and planning following mass Sunday.
- ◆ Baptism: Normally the first Sunday of the month. Call the chaplain's office for details.
- ◆ Marriage: Call the chaplain for details at least six months before wedding.
- ◆ Instruction in the Catholic faith (RCIA). Call the chaplain's office for details.
- ◆ Scripture Class: 7 p.m. Wednesday in the Chapel classroom.
- ◆ Choir Practice: 6 p.m. Wednesday in the Main Chapel.

### Liturgical Christian

- ◆ Sunday: Choir rehearsal at 9 a.m.  
Liturgical worship at 9:30 a.m.  
Adult/Youth/Children bible study at 10:45 a.m.
- ◆ Tuesday: Morning prayer group (Room 4) at 6 a.m.  
Contemporary Gospel Service at 7:30 p.m.
- ◆ Wednesday: Crafts and conversation at 9 a.m. Free childcare provided.  
Women's bible study at 10:45 a.m.  
Baptist service at 7 p.m.
- ◆ Thursday: Liturgical choir rehearsal at 7:30 p.m.
- ◆ Friday: Baptist bible study at 7 p.m.

### Jewish

- ◆ First Friday of the month at MCRD San Diego at 7 p.m.
- ◆ Last Friday of the month in Edson Range Chapel Camp Pendleton at 7:30 p.m.

For more information during work hours call the Chaplain's Office at 577-1333 or the command duty officer after hours at 577-1141.

## Transition seminar

The Miramar Officers' Club will host the Senior Officer Ruehlin Transition Seminar from Monday through May 14.

Seats are limited for this Career Management and Planning Seminar sponsored by Marine Corps Air Bases Western Area and 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing.

The seminar will be led by a consultant from Ruehlin Associates, a professional career transition consulting firm that specializes in training senior military, civil services personnel and private sector personnel on how to plan and manage their careers based on personal career transition experience.

For more information call 577-1222.

## Jazz on the Green

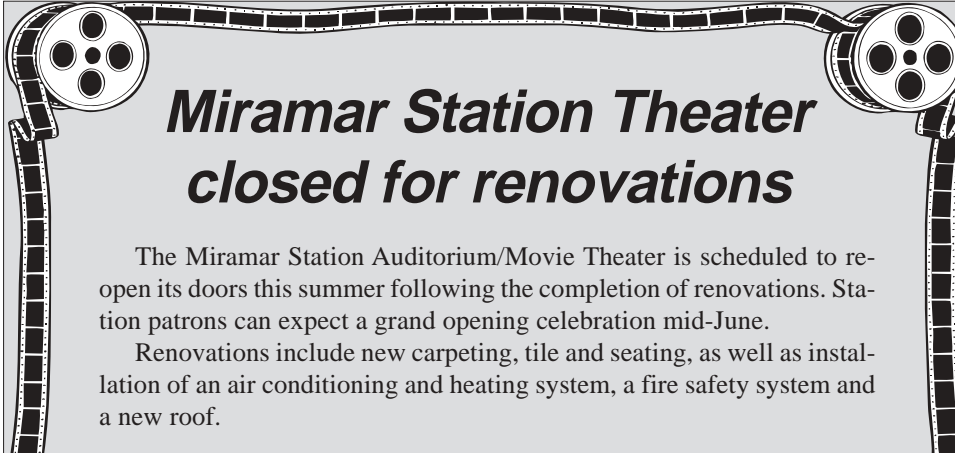
The Sandtrap Bar and Grill is hosting Jazz on the Green featuring live jazz every Friday from 6 to 10 p.m.

The outdoor grill will serve chicken, salmon or steak for \$15.95, which includes a salad and dessert.

Children's meals will be available, and the event also features a full bar with drink specials.

## Parent workshop

The Exceptional Family Member Program is hosting a Specialized Training of Military Parents workshop at Miramar May



## Miramar Station Theater closed for renovations

The Miramar Station Auditorium/Movie Theater is scheduled to re-open its doors this summer following the completion of renovations. Station patrons can expect a grand opening celebration mid-June.

Renovations include new carpeting, tile and seating, as well as installation of an air conditioning and heating system, a fire safety system and a new roof.

18 through 19.

STOMP is a nationally recognized source of information for military families who have children and young adults with disabilities and the professionals working with them. The workshop is funded by Headquarters Marine Corps.

The workshop is an opportunity for those families and professionals to gain knowledge and information regarding how to work together effectively to promote success for the child.

The conference will include presentations on laws and regulations regarding education of students with disabilities, communication strategies, wills and guardianship and networking.

STOMP is a federally-funded Parent Training and Information Center serving military families and professionals regardless of their geographic location.

There will also be workshops at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego May 17 and at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton May 20 through 21.

For more information about the conference or to register please call 577-9807/6585.

For more information about STOMP visit [www.washingtonpave.com/stomp.html](http://www.washingtonpave.com/stomp.html).

## Sponsorship training

The Relocation Office is hosting Sponsorship Training Classes for selected sponsors at the Joint Reception Center, building 2258, on Wednesdays at 9 a.m.

The classes are for sponsors who have been helping someone PCS to Miramar and

would like to strengthen their skills.

Registration before attending is necessary.

For more information or to register call 577-1428.

## Education opportunity

Starting Tuesday and every Tuesday after, a representative of the University of Oklahoma will be at the Education Office, building 5305, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. to answer questions about distance learning.

A representative from Cameron University will also be available and both will also discuss master's of business administration degree programs and Marine Corps wide distance learning programs.

For more information on the event call (760)385-0468 or contact the Education Office at 577-1801.

## Mongolian BBQ

The Miramar Officers' Club will host a Mongolian Barbeque Night today from 6 to 8:30 p.m.

The cost for non-members is \$12.95 for adults, \$6.50 for children ages 4 through eleven, with children under 4 eating for free. Members save 10 percent.

The event is open to all officers, senior enlisted staff (E-6 and above) in appropriate civilian attire, retirees and Department of Defense civilian employees.

Reservations are required.

For more information call 577-4808.

## Smackdown

The San Diego Sports Arena, located at 3500 Sports Arena Blvd., is hosting World Wrestling Entertainment's Smackdown Your Vote! May 17 at 2 p.m.

SYV is a non-partisan voter registration campaign aimed at getting young adults to register to vote and then vote on Election Day. The event will highlight favorite WWE Superstars in encouraging people to make their voices heard through voting.

Present military ID at the arena for discount tickets.

For more information call (619) 224-4171.

*ad*



**For information on  
deployed 3rd MAW Marines  
and Sailors, call the  
Dictaphone at  
1-877-616-8762.  
For more information, call  
577-7397/7294.**

**FUELS,**  
**continued from page 1**

ceive from performing a critical function is reward enough.

“We know that anytime an aircraft comes in here, somebody’s life could be on the line,” said Flaishans. “The bottom line is, if the fuel don’t flow, the proud don’t go”.

“It feels great to help accomplish the mission,” Conklin emphasized. “You know you’re doing something good when you feel like this.”

**MAIL,**  
**continued from page 2**

To ensure that votes arrive in the mail on time, Abell said, deployed eligible voters should seek out their voting assistance officers to learn more about requirements to vote in their state, precinct, borough or locality.

“They have the materials and can help the individual go through the process,” he said. (Abell also urged overseas voters to request a ballot no later than the second week of September. He said absentee voters should mail their ballot on or before Oct. 20, so that “no matter where you are in our service overseas, your ballot will get to the right place by the time it needs to be there

to be counted.”

He also advised family members sending mail to Iraq to use a current address, to print clearly and to include the proper postage.

**GIFT,**  
**continued from page 3**

us to piggy-back the puppy on a flight and present her to Lieutenant Colonel Leppelmeier,” explained Amos.

According to many “Rhino” Marines, the positive effects on the unit since Melissa’s arrival have been very noticeable.

“Having Melissa around keeps my morale high,” said 24-year-old New York City native Lance Cpl. Pamela O’Donnell, operations clerk, MWSS-374. “She’s just a happy addition to the family, and she brings a smile to everybody’s face.”

“That puppy is absolutely incredible,” added Staff Sgt. Sandra D. Magallanes, wire chief, MWSS-374, and Cody, Wyo., native. “She’s intelligent, she’s a fighter, and Melissa is really a representation of the job that we’re doing over here.”

Perhaps no Marine is as smitten with the precocious pup as her commanding officer-turned-adopted father.

“I know that having her around has changed the atmosphere around the unit, be-

cause everybody knows that she lives here in the compound and everybody pets her. She might get in their way sometimes or gnaw at their feet, but no matter what, Melissa is the one little distraction that reminds them of their pet at home,” said Leppelmeier.

“Melissa is great. She knows how to play me like a fiddle,” he chuckled. “She’s changed my whole world and helped me out a lot. She’s just like a daughter to me and I can’t imagine waking up and not having her around.”

**OUTRAGED,**  
**continued from page 8**

of the military.

This same discipline is what will allow us to continue wearing our uniform with pride and respect.

“We will continue to fight for what we stand for and will continue to uphold and stand by our core values: honor, courage and commitment,” said Sgt Alfredo Ramos.

In the end we need to break the barriers between the military branches, and the barriers between civilians and the military service and help each other as Americans.

**Send your letters or opinions to the Flight Jacket editor. Include your name, rank and unit, and send to: [mcmeence@miramar.usmc.mil](mailto:mcmeence@miramar.usmc.mil).**

**CHOOSE,**  
**continued from page 9**

really a good class if you just need to learn about nutrition,” said Carlson. “My goal is for them to walk away having learned 10 more things about their body. Things such as they need to eat breakfast because it kick starts their metabolism, they need protein to repair the muscles, or why they need to eat fruits. I want them to be more empowered.”

Miramar

recycles

For more information,

call Station Recycling

at 577-6366.